

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
Minutes
September 25, 2017

Present: Commissioners Gardiner, Heller, Landt, Lewis, Miller; APRC Director Black; APRC Recreation Superintendent Dials; APRC Interim Parks Superintendent McFarland; APRC Executive Assistant Dyssegard; Assistant Manuel

Absent: City Council Liaison Mayor Stromberg

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gardiner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at Council Chambers, 1175 E. Main Street.

Gardiner noted a point of order for speakers, stating that those wishing to speak about the Senior Program would be called forward during the Senior Program Ad-hoc Subcommittee Discussion under "New Business."

APPROVAL OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MINUTES

Senior Program Subcommittee – May 3, 2017, acknowledged
Senior Program Subcommittee – May 17, 2017, acknowledged
Senior Program Subcommittee – August 8, 2017, acknowledged
Trail Master Plan Committee – June 16, 2017, acknowledged

Regular Meeting - July 24, 2017

Motion: Heller moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 24, 2017, as presented. Lewis seconded.
The vote was all yes.

Special Meeting – August 9, 2017

Motion: Landt moved to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of August 9, 2017, as presented. Miller seconded.
The vote was all yes.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- *Open Forum*

Ron Roth of 6950 Old Highway 99 in Ashland was called forward.

Roth stated that he would like to call attention to property purchased by APRC in conjunction with the Ashland Housing Authority. Various uses for the parcel located on lower Clay Street had been proposed, including as a sports field. The most current proposal was to use the land as a second dog park.

Roth questioned the need for a second dog park. Instead, he advocated for use of the property as zoned – for high-density housing. He emphasized the lack of affordable housing in Ashland and noted that the property could support 60 units. Roth indicated that the Housing Authority would be open to discussions about this use.

Should a second dog park be warranted, Roth suggested alternative properties, including one owned by the Ashland School District adjacent to Willow Wind Elementary School.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

Black asked that Item X, an Executive Session Pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2)(e), be removed from the agenda. Commissioners agreed and the item was removed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

- ***Tennis and Pickleball Courts (Action)***

Black introduced the topic, stating that information reviewed at the Study Session held on September 18, 2017, led to a request to increase the number of pickleball courts in Lithia Park.

Black stated that pickleball was a rapidly growing sport in Ashland. He noted that pickleball was a group sport, and because of the limited availability of pickleball courts in Lithia Park, participants often had to wait for opportunities to play at that location.

Black detailed the actions taken to expand pickleball courts within Ashland. Courts at Helman Elementary School had been prepared for use and a storage facility for equipment installed. The courts were available on nights, weekends, holidays and summer months when Helman Elementary was not in session.

Black noted that people continued to queue up for pickleball in Lithia Park and it had become apparent that additional courts were needed there. He proposed two additional pickleball courts in Lithia's upper tennis courts. He suggested that the upper courts be first come, first served rather than reserved. The upper courts would then be available if not in use by tennis players. Black stated that two of the three upper courts could be prepared for pickleball – one on each side with a court in the center available for tennis play only. Signage would encourage players to be considerate of those already in play.

Black explained that the approximate \$2,000 cost of painting pickleball lines would be defrayed internally with funds set aside for maintenance. He stated that if there were a way to further reduce the cost of striping, staff would utilize the most economic method.

Landt stated that specific times had been discussed at the Study Session. He asked for clarification, as no times had been specified for the upper courts. Black replied that pickleball play would continue on the lower courts at the times previously set, with specific days and hours detailed on signage. With the upper courts being first-come first-served, the upper courts would be available at any time if not already in use by tennis players.

Heller confirmed that the days and times for the lower courts would be Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Public input:

Doug Godwin of 1508 Oregon Street in Ashland was called forward.

Godwin thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to share his experience and educate viewers about the particulars of pickleball. He stated that he was previously a tennis player, but as age and infirmity began to make their mark, tennis was no longer an option. He was introduced to pickleball and found the sport to be as satisfying as tennis. Because the courts were smaller, the risk of physical injury was minimal. Godwin explained that pickleball was one of the fastest growing sports in the United States. The USA Pickleball Association (USAPA) said there were 2,000 members in 2013 and by 2017 there were 20,000 members - just

in the organization sponsoring sanctioned tournaments. The Sports & Fitness Association estimated that there were approximately 2.5 million people playing pickleball in America, with the sport continuing to grow and gain popularity worldwide. Godwin emphasized the physical and mental benefits of the sport. He also noted that the sport was not limited to seniors. Currently there were approximately 17,000 courts across the country. The USAPA website detailed approximately 90 new locations for pickleball opening each month.

Godwin encouraged the Commissioners to consider expanding opportunities for pickleball. He pledged that the pickleball community would help to move the sport forward in Ashland.

Bob Scott of 1001 Pinecrest Terrace in Ashland was called forward.

Scott talked about his experiences with pickleball in Ashland compared with facilities in Palm Springs. He stated that in the past ten years, Palm Springs had gone from no pickleball facilities to pickleball on 50% of all available courts. Scott told the story of an early morning in Palm Springs where there were four courts of pickleball players to one court of tennis players.

Jan Weydemeyer of 2640 Takelma in Ashland was called forward.

Weydemeyer highlighted the broad appeal of pickleball. She applauded APRC's efforts to accommodate the sport in recognition of the growing demand for facilities.

John Riha of 991 Plaza Avenue in Ashland was called forward.

Riha voice support for establishing dedicated pickleball courts in the Rogue Valley, particularly in Ashland. He noted that modifying Lithia Park's upper courts for pickleball was a good short-term solution but said the pickleball community would focus on the demand for dedicated courts. He stated that there were a number of reasons for dedicated courts, including confusion over lines for both tennis and pickleball players when a court was shared. He commented that reserved times for pickleball reduced spontaneity and restricted availability.

Laura Zundel of 877 W. Windemar Drive in Ashland was called forward.

Zundel described her family's experience with pickleball. She explained the particulars of the game and noted that the cost for equipment was reasonable. Benefits included a social component and a fast-moving pace. Zundel spoke in favor of dedicated pickleball courts.

Ted Martin of 730 Jefferson Avenue in Ashland was called forward.

Martin told the story of a shattered femur and efforts to heal. He stated that after a year, he was able to play pickleball. He praised the sport as accommodating people with limited range of motion and noted that the game remained competitive and fun to play.

Commissioner Discussion

Heller thanked those present for speaking. He stated that APRC would work to create dedicated courts when the APRC budget permitted. He stated that APRC hoped to partner with SOU regarding courts and/or courts at Briscoe. In addition, Recreation Superintendent Dials was working with Ashland Tennis & Fitness and others to explore the possibilities for indoor play during the winter.

Motion: Landt moved to approve the installation of two pickleball courts on the upper tennis courts in Lithia Park. The product used would be the most cost-effective available, as determined by APRC staff. Miller seconded.

Discussion

Gardiner asked about the colors used for painting the pickleball lines. He noted that orange or yellow had been used at Helman School and feedback from players was not favorable. Black replied that Helman School colors had been used and apparently the color was too bright.

Motion: Landt moved to approve the installation of two pickleball courts on the upper tennis courts in Lithia Park. The product used would be the most cost-effective available, as determined by APRC staff. Miller seconded.

The vote was all yes.

• ***Ad-hoc Committee Makeup (Action)***

Black stated that an affirmative vote would officially appoint Ad-hoc Senior Program Advisory Committee (ASPAC) members and approve adoption of the proposed bylaws for the group. He submitted changes to the objectives previously approved by the Commissioners as follows:

“Reposition operational oversight and management of the Ashland Senior Program back to the Recreation Division of APRC.” Black clarified that while the Ad-hoc Committee could discuss the objective, APRC staff would implement operationally.

“Implement the plan for increasing recreation and other program offerings to better serve the senior population, and revise Senior Center functions, staffing and job descriptions accordingly.” Black stated that the Ad-hoc Committee could discuss and provide insight that would lead to job descriptions. He added that hiring and creating the job descriptions would be a staff function.

Other changes included the insertion of the word “independent” to the sentence reading “APRC may provide a facilitator to help manage meeting topics and organize the ASPAC’s agendas and final recommendation.” The sentence would now read, *“APRC may provide an independent facilitator to help manage meeting topics and organize the ASPAC’s agendas and final recommendation.”*

Black proposed changing the Committee’s number of citizens-at-large from three members to at least five members. The wording, *at least five members*, would facilitate an increase in member citizens if the Commissioners so decided.

Black recommended that a Chair and Vice-Chair be appointed at the first meeting. He stated that the Chair would convene and adjourn meetings and represent the Senior Advisory Committee when talking to Parks Commissioners or conducting other official business. The facilitator would manage the meetings and work with APRC on ASPAC agendas and meeting scheduling.

Black recommended approval of the proposed objectives and bylaws as amended.

Public Input

Claudia Ballard of Ashland was called forward.

Ballard stated that in keeping with APRC’s mission to provide “...high quality, efficient and safe services with positive experiences for guests and other participants while maintaining community participation in the decision-making process...” she asked that both study sessions and business meetings be televised and amplified to accommodate seniors. She further requested that those meetings where discussions relating to seniors would be an agenda item, the topic be listed before other topics. Posting agendas online and at the

Senior Center at least three days in advance would be helpful, as would providing a venue that could seat all in attendance. Implementing these special considerations would be helpful to the elderly.

Sue Wilson of 1056 Dead Indian Memorial Road in Ashland was called forward.

Wilson presented her views regarding the APRC memo dated August 7, 2017 – pointing out areas that in her opinion were misleading. She advocated for the former Senior Program Manager, stating that the manager's professionalism, openness and knowledge were apparent.

Wilson stated that comparisons with other senior programs did not appear to be an "apples to apples" assessment. She referred to a survey completed in 2009 that characterized Ashland's Senior Program favorably, reporting that the scope of services provided was appropriate.

Wilson commented that the former Senior Program Advisory Board was a non-voting, non-decision-making group that advised the manager. She stated that convening such a board was considered a best practice. She questioned the outcome of a request to move oversight of the Senior Program and its programs to the Ashland City Council, stating that no action appeared to have been taken.

Wilson intimated that the Senior Program Subcommittee recommendations were misleading and did not take into account the needs of Ashland's families and seniors.

Mary Bertrand of 2301 Siskiyou Blvd., No. 133 in Ashland was called forward.

Bertrand suggested that the Senior Program Subcommittee was not given enough time to research the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed changes. She asked about the former manager's performance, inquiring about the steps taken to ensure a positive outcome. Bertrand stated that a timely appointment of a new manager would provide the Senior Program with needed leadership and assistance to mitigate the disruption caused by major changes.

Bertrand highlighted APRC's focus on increased revenue, stating that researching funding should have been ongoing. She noted that resources for seniors were easy to find, including funding for the "operation, acquisition, alteration or renovation of existing facilities of multi-purpose Senior Centers." In addition, the state-sponsored Area Agency on Aging offered funding as well.

Bertrand questioned the Senior Program's move to The Grove, asking about the advantages of such a move. She stated that the move would be completed the APRC survey to gather information about Ashland's preferences for the Senior Program. She stated that programing changes to improve senior opportunities prior to gaining an understanding of what was needed seemed to be the horse before the cart.

Bertrand called for clarification about the roles and assignments for both the Senior Program Subcommittee and the Ad-hoc Senior Program Advisory Committee.

Gwen Davies of 860 Harmony Way in Ashland was called forward.

Davies presented written and recorded commentary from Ashland residents for inclusion into the public record stating that no one interviewed had spoken in favor of the changes. In her opinion, there were a number of actions taken or omitted by APRC – resulting in the perception that APRC tactics were not transparent or seemly. She noted that keeping seniors informed was her primary concern – particularly those seniors who wanted to participate in the process that would ultimately change senior services and programs. Davis stated that professional standards dictated that planning for change should take place prior to implementing change. Finally, Davies advocated for the respect and deference due to elders.

Sandra Sawyer of 585 Thornton Way in Ashland was called forward.

Sawyer presented audios of the Senior Program Subcommittee meetings from January to September 2017 for the public. She asked that the records be posted to the City's website for easy access.

Sawyer commented that the proposed election of a Chair and Vice-Chair for the Ad-hoc Senior Program Advisory Committee seemed to be unnecessary if meetings would be conducted by a facilitator. She stated that in her opinion, the Committee Chair should facilitate the meetings. Sawyer intimated that a paid facilitator would be superfluous.

Mort Pearle of 491 Courtney Street in Ashland was called forward.

Pearle expressed concern about the mandate to increase revenue by at least \$75,000 for the biennium. He stated that APRC's plan to extend Senior Program hours at the center would result in increased maintenance and personnel expenses. Pearle explained that \$75,000 for the 2017-2019 represented only 0.57% of the Parks and Recreation budget. He noted that collecting \$500 per week from the senior participants seemed to be overly optimistic even with extended hours of operation. Pearle questioned the plan to reach out to underserved seniors, stating that an analysis should take into account all of the competitive programs offered in Ashland.

Pearle talked about the reduction of staff, the move to The Grove and oversight by the Recreation Division, asking about APRC's fiduciary responsibilities. He stated that 31% of his local tax dollars supported APRC, and that APRC was wasting those dollars by paying September's salary expense for the manager who was no longer in charge.

Pearle objected to comparisons with programs in Bend, McMinnville and Springfield, noting that the cities used for comparative analysis had significant differences. With Bend at approximately 90,000 residents, McMinnville at 36,000 and Springfield at 60,000 – the comparison to Ashland at 21,000 residents seemed questionable.

Rebecca Cross of Ashland was called forward.

Cross described differences between APRC Parks and Recreation programs and the Senior Program, contrasting the care and support needed by seniors with participants of other disciplines such as sports programs. She asked that the Commissioners reconsider the proposed changes and ensure that the people who managed the Senior Program were well versed in geriatric-centered care.

Arthur Tetrault of 500 YMCA Way in Ashland was called forward.

Tetrault highlighted the political ramifications of APRC's efforts to improve the Senior Program. He stated that the APRC Commission would have three board vacancies in 2018, creating opportunities for senior advocates to potentially serve in those elected positions. He advocated for meeting the needs of seniors through the services provided and indicated that such social services were an integral part of a successful program.

Heidi Gottlieb of Ashland was called forward.

Gottlieb spoke about the recommendations and criteria established in the Performance Audit. She detailed actions to date that were, in her opinion, detrimental to the Senior Program and the seniors – the antithesis of the audit's recommendations. She stated that in her opinion, APRC disregarded public input, displaced employees who had the expertise to manage the program, and placed management at arm's length. Gottlieb

stated that the Senior Program was consistently under budget without compromising provisions for a safe haven for seniors. She indicated that the APRC vision for the Senior Program lacked care and compassion.

Motion: Landt moved to approve the creation of the ASPAC as outlined in the bylaws and stated in the written memo, with the changes APRC Director Black reviewed verbally at this meeting. Lewis seconded.

Commissioner Discussion

Heller addressed the addition of a facilitator who would lead the committee meetings. He acknowledged the intense emotional sentiments of those who had been involved in the Senior Program, stating that in his experience, when strong feelings were involved, a facilitator helped to focus on the task at hand. The facilitator assisted with discussion and resolution, managing disagreements that might arise. Heller noted that his experience led him to believe that such assistance was helpful.

Landt talked about the independence of a facilitator, noting that in his experience, a facilitator was not directed by staff; rather, they ensured that all parties were able to speak freely and equally.

Motion: Landt moved to approve the creation of the Ad-hoc Senior Advisory Committee as outlined in the bylaws and stated in the written memo, with the changes APRC Director Black outlined verbally at the meeting. Lewis seconded.

The vote was all yes.

• ***Golf Course End-of-Season Report (Information)***

Golf Course Coordinator Tom Cronin noted that the Oak Knoll Golf Course was one of 2,500 municipal golf courses nationwide. He stated that a municipal course could offer reasonable prices to players from the very young to seniors. Juniors, for example, could play all day for \$5.

Cronin reviewed revenues for the past three fiscal years: FY2015 \$280,964 FY 2016 \$274,307 and FY2017 \$216,954. He explained that the winter weather had resulted in a downturn for 2017 – with inclement weather creating unplayable conditions November through March of 2017. He detailed expenses of \$824,258 for 2015, \$547,925 for 2016 and \$557,369 for 2017. Cost recovery varied as well - from 56% in 2015 to 38% in 2017. Cronin explained that municipal courses nationwide averaged approximately 60% to 65% for cost recovery. He stated that one of the goals for Oak Knoll was to meet or exceed the norms.

Cronin reported that the golf course was 90 years old; consequently, much of the maintenance included repair work. He stated that old sprinkler heads would be replaced with a newer version providing head-to-head coverage and eliminating dead zones. In addition, four isolation valves would be installed to isolate breaks until fixed. Cronin stated that in the past, the entire system had to be drained and shut down to fix breaks – a sub-par solution during the heat of summer / peak of season.

Cronin noted that a new drain line would be installed near the Number Two tee. He stated that there were approximately 500 yards between the tee and Highway 66 that were wet enough to create soft ground – a deterrent for golfers.

Cronin commented that golf course staff worked hard to connect with the Ashland community. Men's and Woman's League events were held throughout the year. Oak Knoll supported charities with tournaments such as the Ashland Golf Tournament that provided funding for the Dunn House and Habitat for Humanity. The Clubhouse provided a venue for weddings, reunions, birthdays and other special events. Cronin indicated that event revenues increased incrementally from year to year and could become a significant part

of the cost recovery efforts with more targeted marketing. Cronin talked about moving away from traditional advertising, with increased online exposure. He detailed ways to attract tourist dollars by partnering with national organizations and companies. In addition, Cronin planned to actively seek partnership with local hotels and restaurants to raise awareness of the golf course and its amenities.

Cronin highlighted the 10-hole Footgolf course located on Oak Knoll grounds. He noted that the course was designed for families, providing an opportunity for children as well as adults.

Discussion

Heller asked about the money raised from Footgolf. Cronin replied that revenues for the past two years came in at approximately \$4,000.

Cronin stated that no rate increases had been implemented across the board, although individual services were subject to incremental increases depending on the type of play. In response to a question by Heller, Cronin stated that the golf course was reasonably and competitively priced.

Heller emphasized the importance of promoting events at Oak Knoll. He suggested that one avenue to raise awareness might be its mention in the City's monthly newsletter.

Landt commented about the head-to-head coverage and a potential reduction in water usage. Cronin stated that the new equipment would decrease the amount of water needed to keep the greens in top condition.

There followed a brief discussion about ways to track Ashland residents and non-residents. Cronin noted that the point of sale equipment had the capacity to track transactions by ZIP code. He indicated that the data would facilitate focused marketing and increase advertising efficiencies.

Dials commented that staffing at Oak Knoll was decreased by .5 FTE, a change that would boost recovery rates.

• ***North Mountain Park Nature Play Area (Information)***

Dials introduced Libby VanWyhe, Nature Center Manager. Dials noted that VanWyhe would be giving a presentation about the proposed Nature Play Area.

VanWyhe characterized the Nature Play Area as a cutting-edge educational tool designed to overcome barriers that young people might have when connecting to the natural world. She stated that if children were not encouraged to appreciate the natural world, then asking that they protect and care for the environment would be less assured.* Once completed, the play area would become part of the display areas at North Mountain Park.

VanWyhe noted that the benefits of nature play were numerous, helping children develop emotionally as well as physically. Nature play supported creativity, problem solving and academic performance. Everything from health to cognitive development to stress reduction and development of a conservation mindset was nurtured through nature play.

VanWyhe talked about a prototype nature play area that would include natural structures designed for balance, hopping, climbing and shelter building constructed with natural materials. A water feature would give children the opportunity to manipulate water – creating a child-sized watershed. Through water play, they

would experience for themselves the dilemmas that such a necessary and finite resource presents. Children would gain an understanding of how dams work and the interconnectedness of creeks and tributaries.

VanWyhe explained that the Nature Center currently teaches students about soil and water resources, biology and ecology through standards-based field trips. With a nature play area, kids could learn through unstructured play without disturbing wildlife or causing damage to native flora and fauna.

VanWyhe displayed a rough draft of the proposed location for the play area – behind the batting cages at North Mountain Park. She stated that the area was not functioning well as a habitat site but could be easily accessed and it looked out over the natural areas of North Mountain Park, contributing to a sense of wildness and remoteness for children. VanWyhe talked about the stations she wanted to construct in the play area and plans to enclose the area with a low rock wall.

VanWyhe thanked the Commissioners for setting aside \$15,000 in the CIP for the project. She stated that staff was working to identify funding to move the project forward. A \$5,000 grant has been received from Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District for the design process. VanWyhe detailed other agencies that would be approached for funding such as the Oregon Community Association and the Oregon Parks Foundation. Her goal was to award a contract for design and to develop a site plan during the current biennium.

As a first step, a community meeting would be held on Wednesday, October 18, 2017, at The Grove beginning at 6:30 p.m. VanWyhe invited those present to attend, stating that public input would help to prioritize the various features planned for the play area.

There followed a brief discussion about collaborative partnerships and possible stakeholders that could contribute to the project. Heller recommended reaching out to teachers for their input. VanWyhe agreed, stating that connections with schools were well-established and meetings about the project would be publicized.

Landt supported the proposed location, noting that it was a degraded site that could be renovated and useful. He stated that if it became apparent during the design phase that there was insufficient space for all of the proposed nature stations, an alternative for all or part of the project might be the area behind the softball field currently featuring a climbing structure.

* Unless we are willing to encourage our children to reconnect with and appreciate the natural world, we cannot expect them to help protect and care for it." –*Author unknown*

SUBCOMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

o *Bear Creek Salmon Festival*

The 2017 Festival will be held on Saturday, October 7, 2017, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at North Mountain Park.

o *Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee*

Black stated that he had been appointed by the Governor to the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. He noted that one of the roles of the committee was to advise about design criteria for bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the State. Black indicated that the developed criteria would be considered by the Oregon Transportation Commission for bicycle and pedestrian-related issues.

There followed a brief conversation regarding the time commitment and any expenses related to the meetings.

ITEMS FOR COMMISSIONERS

There were none.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Study Session, October 16, 2017 @ The Grove 1195 E. Main – 5:30 p.m. [later cancelled]

Regular Meeting, October 23, 2017 @ Council Chambers 1175 E. Main – 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Manuel, Assistant

These Minutes are not a verbatim record. The narrative has been condensed and paraphrased at times to reflect the discussions and decisions made. Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission Study Sessions and Regular meetings are digitally recorded and available upon request.